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THEATRE WORLD



Vivien' Leigh

Tennent Plays, in association with CEMA, are presenting Vivien Leigh as Sabina in Laurence Olivier's production of *The Skin of Our Teeth*, which opened at Edinburgh on March 19th. Miss Leigh has scored a personal triumph in the rôle played by Tallulah Bankhead in the original American production of Thornton Wilder's unusual play.



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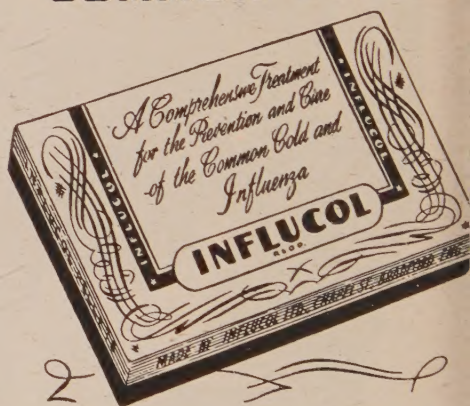
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Edited by Frances Stephens

April, 1945

Over the Footlights

LONDON is enjoying more musical shows than for a long time, with the accent on romance in story and music. Jack Hylton's revival of *Irene* at His Majesty's, with Pat Taylor, was added on March 21st, too late for review this month, and before April is out a new Ivor Novello production, *Perchance to Dream*, should have opened at the Hippodrome.

Also among pre-Easter new productions too late for review were *The Assassin*, by Irwin Shaw, the exciting and poignant war play set in Algiers in 1942, in which Barry Morse and Rosalyn Boulter give outstanding performances; *Appointment with Death*, Agatha Christie's latest play, which reopened the Piccadilly on March 31st with Mary Clare at the head of a strong cast; the revival of *Yellow Sands* at the Westminster, with Cedric Hardwicke, and *Henson's Gaieties*, which brought back Leslie Henson to the Winter Garden—scene of his former triumphs—on March 29th. Bernard Delfont and Carroll Gibbons present this entirely new revue, which, however, is built on similar lines to Leslie Henson's famous *Africa Stars*, with which he and many of his present company toured abroad for a long period. Lavishly produced, *Henson's Gaieties* has in its brilliant company with Mr. Henson, Hermione Baddeley, Walter Crisham, Prudence Hyman, Graham Payn, Joan Alexis, Cyril Smith and Avril Angers. The music is by Hubert Gregg, Vivian Ellis and Leslie Julian Jones, with décor by Charles Reading and dresses by Pat Fanshawe. A number of current shows are brilliantly satirised in sketch, song and dance, and Carroll Gibbons appears with his band both in the orchestra pit and on the stage for the finale.

The Old Vic Company's present brilliant season at the New ends on April 14th, when the last performance of *Peer Gynt* will be given. The last performance of *Richard III* will be given on April 11th, and on the 16th the company, headed by Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Sybil Thorndike and Nicholas Hanne, will take *Peer Gynt*, *Richard III* and *Arms and the Man* on tour for two weeks each at Glasgow and Manchester. The company will then visit France and Belgium, returning to the New Theatre during the first week in September with new productions in their repertory.

The Sadler's Wells Ballet Company will begin a ten-weeks' season at the New on April 17th following their two months' tour of the Continent. Owing to transport problems their proposed visit to South America will not now take place. Two dancers who were with the company before the war—Michael Somes and Harold Turner, who have been discharged from the forces—are rejoining for the new season.

SINCE our last issue appeared, the theatre has suffered a big loss by the death of George Black, perhaps the most colourful and vital stage personality of recent years. It is difficult yet to assess the value of Mr. Black's dynamic contribution to the theatre, where his brilliantly successful musical shows were a by-word for verve and lavishness. Only time can tell whether we have anyone to replace him. To him we owe the new lease of life given to variety, nor was he a man ever to rest on his laurels, and there were signs of a new technique in some of his latest productions like *The Lisbon Story* and *The Rest in Silence*, which promised interesting new developments.

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New Shows of the Month



John Vickers

ALFRED DRAYTON and ROBERTSON HARE

"Madame Louise"

ALFRED DRAYTON and Robertson Hare—surely our funniest comedy pair—return together in a Vernon Sylvaire farce which will run and run. One has only to mention that in a likely and likeable story Mr. Hare appears as the prim and respectable manager of an old-style gown shop, serving Bishops' wives and the like gentility, and Alfred Drayton as a bold bad member of a racing gang who acquires the gown shop in payment of the owner's racing debt, to realise that the stage is set for some superb fooling.

Mr. Drayton becomes "Madame Louise," and modernises the establishment out of all recognition. Poor Mr. Hare finds no happy resting place in such surroundings, but is dragged in wily-nilly to become the victim of Mr. Drayton's fearsome gangster enemies and his no less fearsome wife! The little man's only compensation is the chance to demonstrate his "Three-in-One" gown invention, which in turn merely demonstrates the alluring curves of Madame Louise's mannequins. The plot allows the doubtful heroes to dress up as women quite a bit, and Mr. Hare is divested of his nether garments at least once.

Taking part in the fun with considerable skill and alacrity are Lesley Brook, Constance Lorne, Ruth Maitland, Harriette Johns, Maria Barry, Diana Wilding, Paul Demel, Al Millen and others.

F.S.

"Madame Louise"—Garriick, Feb. 22nd.

"Three Waltzes"—Princes, March 1st.
(See pages 9-16)

"The Two Mrs. Carrolls"—Embassy, March 6th.

"The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles"—Arts, March 7th.

"Gay Rosalinda"—Palace, March 8th.

"Great Day"—Playhouse, March 14th.

THE second production of Anthony Hawtrey at the newly-reopened Embassy Theatre was a success of West End calibre. Martin Vale's "thriller," the story of an artist with a fatal criminal propensity for wife-poisoning, has qualities of suspense and characterisation that lift it above the average, and grip the attention so successfully in the theatre that the few flaws in the plot construction pass unnoticed during the actual performance.

Anthony Hawtrey's production had unusual subtlety of detail, with natural touches that accentuated the dialogue and a heightening of tension that avoided the too-obviously melodramatic, though the pace on the first night inclined to slowness; and his acting as the egoistic and deranged murderer had a similar intelligence and grasp of the macabre, though the man's genius is never suggested by the author. Tatiana Lieven, a Russian actress who had not previously had a part in this country worthy of her emotional gifts, rose magnificently to her opportunities as the young and menaced second wife, her gaiety and charm of temperament at the outset being movingly contrasted with the physical exhaustion and frayed nerves of the later scenes. This actress plays with nerve and face and brain, and achieves emotional breakdown with genuine pathos and without shrillness. In the excellently-written scene between the two wives both she and Marjory Clark, in a firm and beautifully drawn characterisation, won a deserved ovation. Helen Cherry brought an auburn-haired beauty and keen, hard intelligence to the more nebulous part of the prospective third wife (if Ronald Mackenzie's *Musical Chairs* is ever revived here is the ideal Irene Baumer), and Jean Shephard's slatternly gusto as the Riviera servant and Tony Quinn's loquacious old local doctor were in the front rank of character acting.

A.W.

The *Two Mrs. Carrolls* was followed on March 28th by the first British presentation of *Father Malachy's Miracle*, the play by Bruce Marshall which was a tremendous success in America. W. G. Fay appears as Father Malachy, who performs the miracle of transporting an Edinburgh dance hall to the Bass Rock.

"The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles"

It is quite astonishing that this should be the first London production of a play by Shaw which stands high among his later work. There are the usual jibes and audacities levelled at our institutions, but an air of amused tolerance pervades the whole, and in the final speeches a mellowness and understanding which indicate Shaw the Prophet rather than Shaw the Iconoclast.

The Arts Theatre Company are to be congratulated on their production. The group of people who find themselves at the mythical outpost of the British Empire and who fall under the spell of Eternal Man and Woman—Pra the Priest and Prola the Priestess, are exceedingly well drawn. Mark Dignam and Cicely Paget-Bowman as the priest and priestess display a fine dignity and beauty of diction, while Peter Jones as the Clergyman Simpleton gives a performance of rare restraint in a part that might easily be overacted. Anna Burden, Wilfred Babbage, Dorothy Reynolds, Nigel Clarke and Newton Blick are all in fine form, and to the attraction of the settings by Michael Varre must be added the decorativeness of the four young gods and goddesses, played by Natasha Sokolova, Daphne Arthur, Michael Ingram and Owen Holder. High spot of the play is the arrival of Bill Shine as the Angel announcing Judgment Day, and the subsequent radio description of the effects of said Day on England is Shaw at his most impudent and funny. Judith Furse is confirmed as one of our most imaginative producers. F.S.

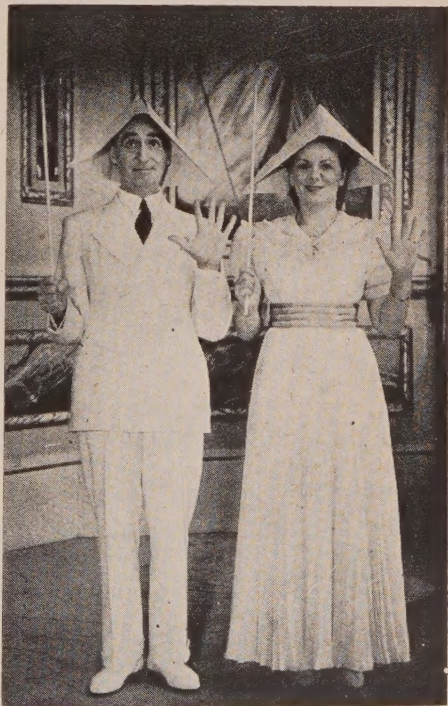
"Gay Rosalinda"

NO doubt thousands will flock to the Palace Theatre quite unaware that this lively and tuneful musical is none other than the famous operetta *Fledermaus* (even though the programme has a note to that effect). Apparently it is only by such disguise that the masses can be brought to an appreciation of light opera, but any means to a worth-while end is better than no end at all, and we can at least hope the haunting music will be recognised as that of Johann Strauss, whose popularity has increased with the growing grimness of the war years.

No one, however innocent of operatic meanings, could fail to enjoy this version. The production is obviously designed to attract the ordinary theatregoer, hence the inclusion of first rate actors like Cyril Ritchard (as Eisenstein) and Jay Laurier (as the Jailer). There are also three first rank operatic singers in the cast, Ruth Naylor (Rosalinda), James Etherington (Alfred) and Rene Ambrus (Adele). But the stroke of genius was to have Richard Tauber conducting, for to him must go the glory of having brought the gaiety of Old Vienna to



Robert Beatty, Sonia Dresdel, Raymond Lovell and Peter Hammond in a dramatic moment from *Laura*, at the St. Martin's.



Jack Morrison (in the Joseph Coyne part) and Nita Croft (in the Lily Elsie part) in a scene from James Shirvell's revival of *The Dollar Princess*, now on a prior-to-London tour.

blitzed London. Never did company and orchestra blend with such accord, and never were the smallest parts rendered with more obvious enjoyment and verve.

F.S.

"Great Day"

ONE hesitates to criticise any author bold enough to give us a new play in these days, but if I had to criticise this comedy it would be to say that Lesley Storm, the authoress, apparently fearing that the happenings in an English Village Hall might pall a bit, has overcrowded her canvas, and done less than justice to some really clever characterisations which were worthy of more leisurely presentation.

Having said that, *Great Day* can be recommended as an extremely amusing and likeable little play, woven round a neat idea. It is suddenly announced to the members of the Women's Institute at Denley, a typical Kent Village near Canterbury, that Mrs. Roosevelt—no other—is coming on the following day to inspect the fruits of their considerable war effort. Particularly outstanding are Irene Handl, as the plebian Mrs. Beale; Mary Hinton in the part of a wife whose last-war-Major husband ends his neer do well existence by suicide; Olga Lindo as Mrs. Mumford, of the local, whose natural sense of leadership puts her in charge, and Elsie Randolph as Mrs. Mott, lively opera singer and real good sort.

F.S.

Gateway Theatre Club

IT is much to the credit of the young professionals at this promising repertory company that in their March production of Clemence Dane's *The Way Things Happen*, they compelled attention to the intrinsic merits of the play.

On a small stage this production lacked a little flexibility in the acting, but it must be acknowledged the dramatist has compelled her young people to almost a single note. The dramatist's character drawing is happier with women than with men. So it was more a distaff evening, and in Enid Staff the company found a young actress who can enlist sympathy, suggest strain and depth, and maintain a poise and bearing most valuable to a player in the Gateway's proximity of stage and audience. Phyllis Rimmer and Dorothy Shackleton shared this ability to adjust playing to audience, which suggests that Basil Ashmore's production was largely responsible. His setting of the stage was most creditable. Richmond Nairne and Donald Cresswell put a fine conviction into the two young men, and there was a breath taking moment of superb playing by Duff McCulloch as a doctor.

The Gateway Theatre presented on Good Friday, for three weeks, Strindberg's *Easter*, with Esme Percy and a cast of West End actors. The Haydn String Quartette music to the Seven Last Words of Christ, which was requested by Strindberg, is being performed, with M. Salzedo, brilliant Hungarian violinist also providing additional musical effects.

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PICTURES
BY
ALEXANDER
BENDER

EVELYN
LAYE
Catherine Sheridan,
Princess, in Act 1,
The play is set in the
Victorian period.



“Three Waltzes”

AT PRINCES THEATRE

HENRY SHEREK, who presents *Three Waltzes*, is to be congratulated on giving us a musical with a difference, for his new romantic play with music has some refreshing qualities, particularly in the neatness of its story and the wit and gentle fire of its dialogue. Add to these Evelyn Laye at her loveliest and most melodious; a strong supporting cast (with Esmond Knight and Charles Goldner in fine form); a production of unusual beauty and charm, and you have a wholly delightful piece of entertainment.

The book and lyrics, already commented upon, are the skilful work of Diana Morgan and Robert MacDermot, who have brought just the right admixture of romance and humour to the love stories of the three generations of Sheridan and Wessex.

Norman Marshall's production takes in the Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian (present day) periods with grace, lavishness and authenticity, while the lilting Oscar Straus music needs no introduction to audiences fast learning how to recapture their nostalgic love of the waltz.



Act 1: Victorian Period

The opening scene in the Green Room of the Alhambra Theatre, showing some of the charming ladies of the ballet.



Katherine Sheridan, leading young dancer, who has a great future before her, is greeted on her arrival at the theatre by her agent, who wishes her to sign a contract to dance in Paris. However Katherine has other ideas, for she has just fallen in love with Richard Wessex and intends to marry him and leave the stage.

L. to R.: Madoline Thomas as Mrs. Evans (Katherine's chaperone), Evelyn Laye as Katherine Sheridan, Fred Berger as Joseph Brunner (a theatrical agent) and Charles Goldner as John Brunner (his son).



Act I, Scene 2: Dorney House, Belgrave Square

Richard Wessex tells the members of his aristocratic family that he intends to marry Katherine Sheridan in spite of their disapproval.

Left: Esmond Knight as Richard Wessex.



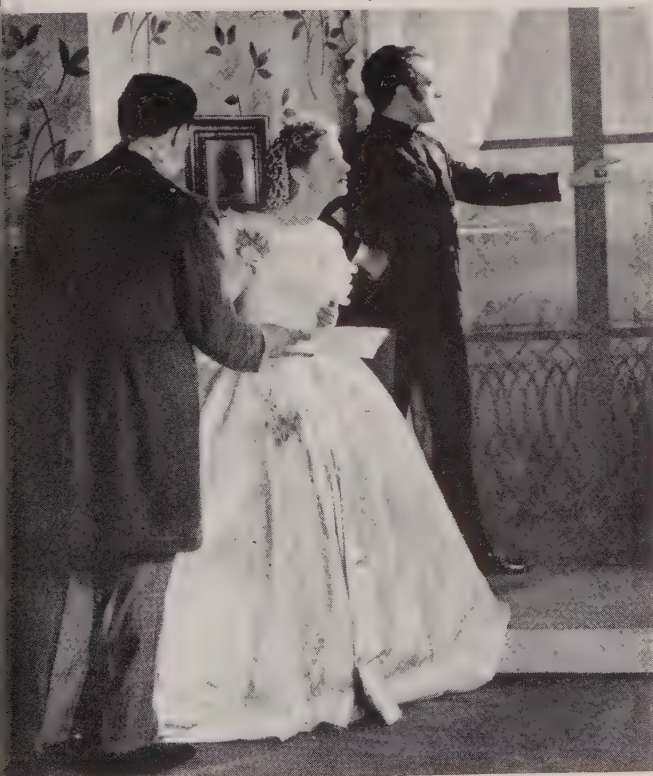
Mrs. Evan Evans: Duchesses and Honourables coming to see us and all that! Why don't they keep in their place?

Katherine's chaperone hears that the Duchess of Dorney is to pay a call.

Katherine: Your Grace, I will never give him up.

The Duchess, pointing out that if he marries an actress Richard Wessex will be ostracised, tries to persuade Katherine to give him up.

Grace Lane as Caroline, Duchess of Dorney.



Act I, Scene 3: Katherine's House, Buckingham Gate

When John Brunner first called, Katherine had refused to sign the Paris contract, but now when he offers it again unseen by Richard Wessex who is watching his regiment march past in the street below, Katherine signs the contract and sacrifices Richard's love. She realises that to marry him will ruin the military career which means so much to him.



Act II: Edwardian Period

Scene 2: The Cafe Royal

Mrs. Evan Evans: What a lovely gown!
Netta: Worth—and worth it!

The friends of Katie Sheridan (Katherine's daughter), a brilliant young singer who has just scored a big triumph at Daly's Theatre gather at the Cafe Royal for a celebration supper.

L. to R.: Frances Clare as Netta Stevenson, and Frank Royde as Val Stevenson.



Katie Sheridan: Tonight was my last performance.

To the general consternation Katie announces that she is leaving the stage to marry Dickie Wessex, whom Katie's old chaperone and John Brunner realise is none other than the son of Katherine's Richard.

L. to R.: Felix Irvin as Max Brown, Charles Goldner as John Brunner, Evelyn Laye as Katie Sheridan, Bernard Ansell as Frederick the waiter, Fred Groves as the Guv'nor.

John Brunner: All I want my dear, is your happiness.

John Brunner, bitterly disappointed at Katie's decision, is afraid she will not be happy when she leaves the stage, for as he afterwards said to Frederick the waiter, "They call it the smell of the sawdust or the glamour of the footlights, but in her case I would call it grease paint in the blood."



Act II, Scene 3: The River Wye, below Tintern.

Katie: I suppose that in years to come people will be taken to call on dear old Mrs. Wessex.
Katie is trying hard to fit into Dickie's distinguished and very proper social background.
(Esmond Knight as Dickie Wessex.)



EVELYN LAYE
as Katie Sheridan

charming figure in the coy fashions of the
Edwardian era.

Katie: You old devil, you know perfectly well
I am playing tomorrow night, don't you.
John Brunner persuades Katie to run
away to London to take over the part
when the principal singer falls ill.



Act II, Scene 4: Katie's dressing room at Daly's Theatre.

The Company congratulates Katie on her brilliant success on her return to the show; an occasion also distinguished by a visit from the King.



The Guv'nor: A lovely performance, my dear.

The Guv'nor praises Katie's lovely performance on this night of the King's visit to the show.



Dickie W'essex: You theatrical people seem to attach an absurd importance to your profession.

It begins to dawn on the orthodox Dickie that Katie will never be happy away from the theatre.



Katie: I seem to have the world and the stars in my hands tonight.

Dickie: I hope you will always have them.

Unknown to Katie, Dickie has left a farewell note on the dressing table.



Act III: Georgian Period

Scene 1: Conference Room, Supremacy Pictures, Hollywood

Katie's daughter, Kay Sheridan, a film star, takes a delight in snubbing Dick Wessex (Dickie Wessex's son) who has been called in to give advice on the film featuring Kay's famous grandmother, especially when he is asked to play the part of Richard Wessex. *L. to R.:* Esmond Knight as Dick Wessex, Gerald Lennan as Alistair McDougall, Frances Clare as Marjorie Russell, Fred Groves as Bob Steiner, Bruce Winston as Stanislaus Vayda and Evelyn Laye as Kay Sheridan. *Left background:* Alastair Thomson as Harry Lewis at the piano.



EVELYN LAYE
as Kay Sheridan.



Scene 2, in the Canteen. Joan North as
Gloria the waitress.



Dick: It's a funny set up
isn't it?

Dick's efforts to play the part of his grandfather have not been very successful and it looks as though the film will be suspended. However, Kay begins to unbend a little and when John Brunner, now a very old man—also in Hollywood to give advice on the picture—sees how things are he is not slow to tell Kay that her haughty manner is discouraging the young Wessex.



Scene 3: On the set

Key: I shall love you forever.

When Dick and Kay get on to the set again and begin to act the love scene between their respected grandparents, they realise that they too have fallen in love with each other. However, in this the third generation there are no obstacles to a Wessex marrying a Sheridan and all ends happily as the curtain falls on the finale of the play.



"Private Lives"

AT THE APOLLO



Victor: I can hardly believe it's true. You and I here alone together, married.

Victor Prynne (Raymond Huntley) and his wife Amanda (Kay Hammond) on the balcony of their hotel. They have just arrived in France on their honeymoon trip.



Amanda: Here we are starting afresh with two quite different people. In love all over again, aren't we?

Elyot: No.

By an amazing coincidence Amanda's ex-husband Elyot (John Clements) has come for his honeymoon to the same hotel.

PICTURES BY

ALEXANDER BENDER



Victor: To absent friends.

Realising they are still in love with each other, Amanda and Elyot have fled, leaving Victor and Elyot's wife, Sybil (Peggy Simpson), to console each other.

IF confirmation were needed of the enduring quality of Noel Coward's genius in the realm of domestic comedy, this revival at the Apollo demonstrates it again and again.

There is indeed no more witty piece of entertainment in Town than this brilliantly produced comedy built around the domestic squabbles of Amanda and Elyot. The situations are as amusing as ever and the passage of time has not detracted one wit from the sparkle of the dialogue.

Kay Hammond and John Clements do well in the parts created by Gertrude Lawrence and Noel Coward. John Clements has produced with skill and Raymond Huntley, Peggy Simpson and Yvonne Andre complete a brilliant company. The charming décor by G. E. Calthrop has a nostalgic pre-war appeal.



Elyot: Sollocks!

In Amanda's flat in Paris some days later the atmosphere is turbulent and idyllic by turns as will be seen from the pictures in this and the page facing. In fact Amanda and Elyot have settled down again to the sort of life which led to their previous rift. So far this evening, however, good relations have been maintained with difficulty by the constant resort to their scheme "Sollocks," which warning brings a two minutes' self-imposed silence, during which their ruffled tempers have subsided.





Elyot: You're the most thrilling, exciting woman
that was ever born.

Amanda: Dearest, dearest heart—

(*Below*):

Amanda: I hate you—do you hear? You're conceited and overbearing, and utterly impossible.

Elyot: You're a vile tempered, loose-living, wicked little beast, and I never want to see you again so long as I live.

Elyot: Amanda darling—Sollocks.

Amanda: Sollocks yourself.





Amanda: Marry you again, never, never, never. . . . I'd rather die in torment.

Elyot: Shut up; shut up; I wouldn't marry you again if you came crawling to me on your bended knees.
Sybil and Victor arrive at the flat at the moment when "Sollocks" has failed most miserably



Louise: Bon jour, Madame.

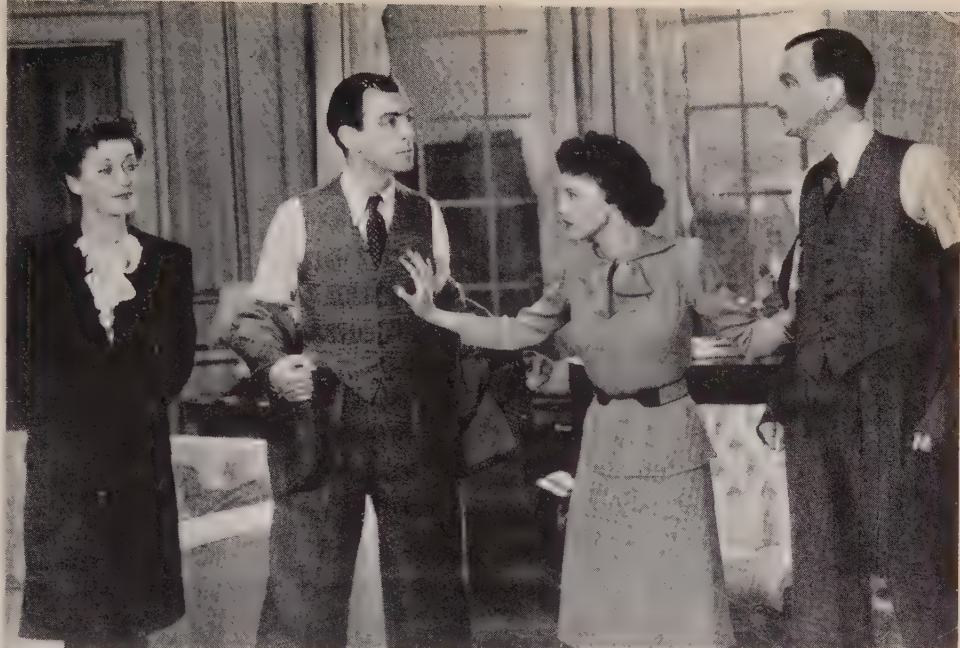
Sybil: What?—Oh—bon jour.

Louise, the maid (Yvonne Andre) awakens Sybil the following morning.



Victor: This is all very unpleasant, Amanda.

Amanda: I quite agree, that's why I want to go away.
 The conventional Victor finds the situation most embarrassing.



Sybil: Stop, stop, it's no use going on like this. Stop, please (to Amanda). Help me, do, do, do, help me.

Amanda: I'm not going to interfere. Let them fight it out if they want to.

Sybil, always inclined to be hysterical, is now completely out of her depth.

(Below): *Victor*: That was a damned fool thing to do.

Elyot: How did I know she was going to choke.

An amusing moment towards the close of the play. When the curtain falls it is Amanda and Elyot who creep out the best of friends, leaving Victor and Sybil in the midst of a first-class row of their own.





Mr. Woodhouse: Gipsies—gipsies in Highbury!

News of the coming of gipsies to the locality is very disturbing to Mr. Woodhouse.

L. to R.: Margaret Vines as Jane Fairfax, Frank Allenby as Mr. Knightley, Wynne Clark as Mrs. Weston, Anna Neagle as Emma, Cecil Ramage as Mr. Weston, Grey Blake as Frank Churchill, and Graveley Edwards as Mr. Woodhouse.

(Left): Mrs. Weston: Oh Emma my love, he's quite the young man one would choose for a son.

Mrs. Weston speaks in glowing terms of Frank Churchill, recently returned to Highbury.

Right: Gillian Lind as Miss Bates.

“Emma”

AT THE ST. JAMES'S

THIS dramatisation by Gordon Glennon, presented by Robert Donat at the St. James's, is a delightful picture of the England of Jane Austen's *Emma*. We are made nostalgically aware of the grace and leisure which abounded in those days even though astonishing trivialities comprised the daily round at a time when Napoleon held Europe in thrall. Jane Austen's gentle tilting at the society of her day is seen through the character of Emma, the heroine,

that somewhat meddlesome young lady of undoubted gifts. Anna Neagle brings to the part humour and understanding, and looks lovely in the charming costumes of the period. There is a strong supporting cast and to the skill of Jack Minster's direction must be added the exquisite décor by G. E. Calthrop.

Such a play must have a deep appeal at the present time when utility, speed and inevitable ugliness are the attributes of war.

PICTURES BY SWARBRICK STUDIOS



Emma: Mr. Elton, my astonishment is beyond anything I can express.

Emma is dumbfounded by the attentions of the Vicar, Mr. Elton. She has planned that he shall propose to her little friend, Harriet, and is aghast to find that she herself is the object of his affections.

George Thirlwell as Mr. Elton.



Harriet: Oh Miss Woodhouse, what is there left of my faith when the Vicar himself can deceive me.

Harriet is extremely upset when she learns that Mr. Elton, the Vicar, is not in love with her.

Terry Randal as Harriet Smith.



Frank Churchill: Dearest ladies, your presence brightens the room like summer sunshine. The night of the ball at Hartfield House. Emma, a dazzling hostess in white, with Harriet Smith, joins the guests in the drawing room.

Left: Ambrosine Phillpotts as Mrs. Elton.



Frank Churchill: Dear Miss Woodhouse, I cannot bear it one moment longer.

Emma prepares to receive Frank Churchill's long awaited proposal of marriage only to be told of his devotion to Jane Fairfax.



Emma: You know how fond you are of Mr. Knightley.

Emma strains all her powers of persuasion to win her father's consent to her marrying Mr. Knightley.

(Below):

Miss Bates: I shouldn't be surprised if Mr Woodhouse were to be the next.

With weddings planned for no less than three other couples marriage seems to be in the air at Hartfield House. However, as the curtain falls on the happy gathering, Mr.

Woodhouse firmly declines Miss Bates's suggestion that he will be the next.



The Mystery of Mary Clare

by ERIC JOHNS

MARY CLARE hardly ever goes to the theatre to see a thriller and never goes to the library to borrow one. To use her own words, she never feels the need for that sort of excitement. Yet nine out of every ten West End managers casting a thriller, telephone Mary Clare to offer her the leading rôle. They remember her in *The Ghost Train* and, through a succession of evil genius parts, culminating in the murderess-heroine of *Ladies in Retirement*, and now Bertie Meyer has given her another opportunity to freeze our blood in the latest Agatha Christie play, *Appointment with Death*.

The fact that managers instantly think of Mary Clare to affright us is really the greatest compliment they could pay her, for no one in private life could be less like the horror-heroines they earmark as Mary Clare parts in their scripts. In her case they refuse to cast to type and recognise a real actress in their midst, capable of assuming convincingly a character diametrically opposed to her real self.

In managerial circles thrillers are being regarded as a money-making form of escapism, but the thriller of to-day has to be feasible if it is to hold the interest of an audience which may have been in the Front Line or endured the entire hell of London's attacks from the air. Such practically-minded people have no time for the Penny Dreadful. They want a story which might conceivably happen to them as they live their normal lives. The day of the Hooded Terror and the Clutching Hand is over. Such notions are too childish to hold the interest of a hard-boiled 1945 audience. Psychology and Science are the keynotes of the contemporary thriller. Now an audience is enthralled by a hero with a kink for inflicting fatal dagger slashes shaped like a cobra; or they are gripped by a dastardly plan to wipe out the human race by infecting an ear of wheat with a new and deadly germ that pollutes our daily bread. Such ideas are possibilities, despite their improbability, and as such they command our full and serious attention in the theatre.

There have been instances in which both the thrill and the play have been good, and then an entertainment has been produced which we can see over and over again, even though we know what is coming next. Masterpieces of crime play blended with psychological observation, such as *Rope*, *Gaslight*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Ladies in Retirement*, *Pink String* and *Sealing Wax*. *Uncle Harry*, *Ten Little Niggers*, *Night Must*



Fall, and *The Old Ladies* have all thrilled us in the most convincing manner imaginable and stimulated the emotions to a degree unknown in the Edgar Wallace school of playwriting.

In most of these plays character rather than plot is all-important. We gaze fascinated at some mentally warped creature playing havoc in her own environment, just as we stand half-petrified in the Reptile House at the Zoo and watch a python swallow a whole rabbit for her lunch. It is hideous and nauseating, but wild horses cannot drag us away from the spectacle.

Mary Clare is always being asked to play the Ogre-heroines of these studies in abnormal psychology. In thrillers the more-sinned-against-than-sinning leading lady died with Pearl White, but Mary Clare would never have been interested in a rôle that only demanded her to look helpless and decorative all evening in order to be snatched from the jaws of death as the final curtain came down.

Mary has played most rôles in her time—*White Cargo's* "Tondeleyo," queen of all seductresses; *Will Shakespeare's* "Mary Fitten," who left her mark on the world's literature; *Cavalcade's* "Jane Marryot," the Everywoman of our time; and "Rhoda Monkams," the perfect suburban-mother of *After October*, to say nothing of the notorious murderesses in her repertoire. It is a varied portrait gallery; each one has

Continued overleaf

lived and not one critic has ever suggested she has been miscast in a single rôle.

It has not always been like falling off a log. I was with Mary while she was working on the script of *Appointment with Death* and I know what the study of that rôle cost her. These showy thriller parts offer a golden opportunity to any actress, but they are enormously difficult to play. There is something more in them than applying a gruesome make-up, and grimacing about the stage all evening.

Hate is usually the all-consuming passion of these characters which Mary Clare is called upon to bring to life. They hate someone with every fibre in their being and with a terrifying intensity that warps their entire life and colours their most trivial reactions. It is the portrayal of this all-embracing hatred which Mary finds so difficult in these rôles. She has to endeavour to hate a character with a passion quite foreign to her own self, a strain comparable to the bursting of a mental blood-vessel.

Off-stage Mary is the most devoted mother to her son and daughter and the recent arrival of her grandchild has been her favourite topic of conversation, both in and out of the theatre. We all knew of Mary's affection for her children, and now we know she feels hers to be the perfect grandchild, which is as it should be in any normally happy family community. Yet, in *Appointment with Death* she plays a woman consumed with hate for her children and no matter how great a technician an actress may be she is going to find that part a tough nut to crack if she happens to have as soft a spot for children as Mary Clare.

Mary Clare is the woman for the job, as she has immense will power. She had it even before she went on the stage. As a young girl she decided to become an actress, and refused to allow even lack of funds to stand in her light. Despite her youth, she borrowed the relatively enormous sum of £50 for her studies, but within two years she had toured the length and breadth of the country and every penny had been repaid, and Mary was well on her way to being an actress worthy of the name.

Whispers from the Wings

by LOOKER ON

"ISN'T she a lad!" says one of the characters in *Great Day* about Mrs. Mott, the lively, outspoken and leftist ex-D'Oyly Carte singer: the one bit of glamour in the village, who nevertheless can top a turnip and polish up an apple with the best of them.

Elsie Randolph is Mrs. Mott, and enjoys every moment of the part, even though, as she told me when I had a chat with her, she was a bit nervous about this particular rôle, being a musical comedy star herself, just in case audiences should think she was merely putting across her own personality. "Apart from that," said Miss Randolph, "it is like a holiday to be pottering around in an overall for a lot of the time: what a relief from the constant changes and sheer physical hard work of a musical." In proof of which, Miss Randolph certainly looked delightfully fresh after the performance. I remarked on her deft handling of the vegetables which play such a notable part in the proceedings. "That at any rate isn't acting," she said, "these past few years I have had plenty of experience in that line: in fact I almost put my own house up round me when I took a place on the coast not long ago."

Great Day has no less than eleven women in the cast, not to mention a woman author. "Do put it on record," begged Miss Randolph, "that in spite of all the Brains Trust might think, we are undoubtedly the happiest company in Town. Not one hint of disharmony has arisen. Putting on the play has been grand fun from the first rehearsal." I thought to myself it would be a strange cast that failed to keep friendly and cheerful with Elsie Randolph about. She has that kind of tonic personality and naturalness and a zest for life and her work which is really inspiring. Her dressing room was piled high with spring flowers—first night offerings, and in spite of her elegant black and red dressing gown, I thought she looked just right against that background.

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. . . is, of course, a gift. Nevertheless, there is a very definite technique, and many talented writers perfect it only after years of effort wasted on immature work which no manager will look at seriously. The L.I.J. Playwriting partner has recently had four plays produced within a month; one took £800 in one week; Messrs. French have published most of them; he has run his own Little Theatre, etc., etc. Timely help from him may save you a long apprenticeship. A few associates only. Write:

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BY OUR
AMERICAN
CORRESPONDENT
E.
MAWBY GREEN

(Right):

BEATRICE LILLIE and BERT LAHR
in the Billy Rose production of *Seven
Lively Arts* at the Ziegfeld Theatre.

SO far this season we have said very little about the new musicals, but now that Beatrice Lillie has taken the town in *Seven Lively Arts* this should not be put off any longer.

As one observer once said, "There's always a cockeyed majesty about a Billy Rose production," and his *Seven Lively Arts* is a princely example. Mr. Rose, who during the past ten years has treated us to elephants and Jimmy Durante in *Jumbo*; Johnny Weissmuller and a long line of Aquabelles headed by Eleanor Holm (now Mrs. Billy Rose) in the World's Fair *Aquacade*; and *Carmen Jones*, the current exciting negro version of the opera *Carmen*, has unleashed



Photo by Bob Golby

Echoes from Broadway

Whatever theatrical inhibitions he had left of his mammoth entertainment, *Seven Lively Arts*. It is a spectacular revue pulsing with all the top talent that \$350,000 can buy. Norman Bel Geddes has designed some magnificently effective settings that are powerful, lovely and impressive in turn and Mary Grant has matched them with rich and radiant costumes. Moss Hart, George S. Kaufman and Ben Hecht are mainly responsible for the sketches and continuity, while Cole Porter tapped out the tunes, the most persistent being "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye." However, to lure the lucre into the box office, Mr. Rose assembled an astounding array of stars that attracted an unprecedented half million dollar advance sale. The first and most magnetic is, of course, Bea Lillie, the world's greatest satiric comedienne, who is staunchly supported by Bert Lahr, one of America's funniest laugh-makers. For those who like to be "sent" by swing, there is Benny Goodman and his celebrated clarinet, and for those balletomaniacs who like to swoon at entrechats, there is the greatest classical ballet dancer since Pavlova, Alicia Markova, with her partner, Anton Dolin, spinning to

special music by Igor Stravinsky; and for everybody there is a round dozen of irresistibly rounded show girls so devastatingly dressed by Valentina as to inspire Cole Porter's "Is It the Girl or Is It the Gown?"

It is reported Mr. Rose is paying Miss Lillie ten per cent. of the weekly gross, which is about \$45,000, making her the highest paid actress ever to appear on Broadway. That she is worth every penny of it to the producer and his product no one will deny. Amidst all this superior talent and trimmings, it is her slick mannish bob and shining face that stands out. Whether she is crisply clowning in lavish production numbers like "Fragonard in Pink" and "Dancin' to a Jungle Drum" as a temple priestess or left with just a chair in front of a curtain to coo "When I Was a Little Cuckoo" and wrestle with the "Waltz Song" from *Tom Jones*, she is fabulously funny. In her sketches, too, she is equally fantastic. First in "There'll always be an England" as Lady Agatha Pendleton, who shocks the American G.I.s in her efforts to make them feel at home by using the loose language of their slang books;

(Continued overleaf)

then as a customer trying to buy a ticket for a ballet of which she cannot remember the name; and finally reaching the height of hilarity in "Heaven on Angel Street," a take-off of *Gashlight*, as the tortured Mrs. Manningham, who keeps repeating, "You're so good to me," as Mr. Manningham graciously breaks another of her fingers.

Bert Lahr with his wide open face and superior slap-stick, is in there pitching too with "Drink," a wild concoction of all the drinking songs ever poured out and "The Great Man Speaks," which spikes its satire at the bombastic Orson Welles.

To put over the songs, there are three most attractive girls with most attractive voices, Nan Wynn, Dolores Gray and Mary Roche and their combined warbling of "Wow-oo-wolf!" is one of the wittier and prettier moments of the musical.

Seven Lively Arts is Mr. Rose's first exhibit in his newly acquired Ziegfeld Theatre, which used to house the lavish and memorable productions of the late Florenz Ziegfeld. It is easy to see that Mr. Rose is not letting the great Ziegfeld down. He has restored the theatre to its old splendour and on the gala opening night celebrated the occasion with champagne bubbling for everybody.

With the fortune sprung from their phenomenal money-maker, *Oklahoma!*, now over 800 performances old and tickets still at a premium, the Theatre Guild has gone musical on us again and has brought forth an even larger chunk of Americana with *Sing Out, Sweet Land!*—a salute to American folk and popular music, by Walter Kerr. The history of this company from its earliest days in Puritan New England to current times is told in song through a fictitious character known as Barnaby Goodchild, who is sentenced by the Pilgrims to roam through the ages around the land, for singing his songs on the Sabbath. There is a wealth of material in song here and for the most part it is well treated. We were particularly fond of what they did with "Frankie and Johnny"; the "Five O'clock Whistle" dedicated to the Blues and embodying "Trouble, Trouble," "Funny Bunny Hug" and the "Basement Blues"; and the "Speakeasy Night Club" scene which had great vitality and recaptured the hectic madness of the roaring twenties with "I've Got Rhythm," "My Blue Heaven" and

"The Charleston." The only thing that did not have a lilt was Walter Kerr's amateurish book, particularly in its treatment of Barnaby Goodchild, who emerged as nothing more than a sweet singing jackass. It is to Alfred Drake's credit that he was able to bring some charm to this character. Mr. Drake has a wonderful singing voice and personality for this sort of thing, having originally created the leading male rôle in *Oklahoma!* Burl Ives, a big man with a beaming manner for putting over ballads, developed into a sensation with his delivery of "Foggy, Foggy Dew" and "Rock Candy Mountain." For our appetite we relished Bibi Osterwald's lively music hall style in ripping off "Casey Jones" and "Yes, Sir, She's My Baby!" The production is handsome in the usual Guild manner with costumes by Lucinda Ballard blended perfectly to the simple yet striking settings of Albert Johnson. *Sing Out, Sweet Land!* is certainly no *Oklahoma!* but it has enough appeal to find an audience for some time to come. The notices were divided.

For those critics who did not care too much for the Guild musical, the next night Oliver Smith and Paul Feigay presented *On the Town*, by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, with music by Leonard Bernstein and choreography by Jerome Robbins. This they raved ecstatically about in their columns the next morning, paying tribute to its freshness, originality and verve, although the approvers of *Sing Out, Sweet Land!* did not share their enthusiasm to the same extent. It is on the delightful thread of Jerome Robbins' tremendously successful ballet, *Fancy Free*, which was presented last season by the Ballet Theatre at the Metropolitan Opera House, that *On the Town* has been built up on. Three sailors are in New York on a twenty-four hour pass. They see a picture of Miss Turnstiles, the selected subway beauty of the month, and individually set out to find her for the gob who has gone overboard for her exotic charm. Each runs across romance, one with Nancy Walker, a gruff and ready taxi driver who lashes out "Come Up to My Place" and gives him what she wants up there; the second with Betty Comden, a lady anthropologist with a taste for the gargantuan male, who he meets in the Museum of Natural History; and the third with Sono

(Continued on facing page)

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Osato, Miss Turnstiles, a Coney Island cooch dancer with operatic aspirations, who he tracks down at Carnegie Hall where she is studying voice under an old liquor-loving coach.

On the Town has moments of originality in book, score and choreography that strike sharp with their brilliance, but also many lapses that are only a notch or two above semi-professional. Jerome Robbins' choreography contains some acute comic touches like the "fanny" first routine for Miss Turnstile's subway number, but as a whole Sono Osato, who was the dancing discovery of last season under Agnes de Mille's direction in *One Touch of Venus*, is not nearly as effective. Nancy Walker is a minor riot with her material, but Betty Comden and Adolph Green interpreting their



Celeste Holm as Evelina in *Bloomer Girl*.

own lines seem to lack all professional polish, as do John Battle and Cris Alexander, the other two sailors. They seem to miss the ability to fill out a stage and project their personality across the footlights. Leonard Bernstein, who recently won the Music Critic's award for his symphony, *Jeremiah*, has written an interesting score that is serviceable if not tunelessly outstanding. It is impossible now to recall one distinct melody, but we do remember it had the rhythm of New York that paced the show. Co-producer Oliver Smith designed the production and George Abbott stamped his mark of direction on it. There seems little doubt, in view of the healthy box office

(Continued on page 31)



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Amateur Stage

WITH the end of the war in Europe in sight, and the current season giving plenty of evidence of increased amateur activity, it may be opportune to call attention to a post-war point which committees and secretaries will have to face. It concerns the fundamental factor of finance. Costs of everything have soared, and when estimates are received for productions after the war it will be found that scenery, costumes and all accessories involve larger sums than hitherto.

What is the answer? There seems no alternative for a society, wishing to stage a musical play on a standard approaching the professional, having to increase its prices to the public to meet the extra cost. Taken all round, the prices of tickets for amateur shows before the war were not unduly high, and some increase will not be out of the way.

It will be up to the amateur stage after this war to maintain, and improve upon, its pre-war standards, and those with an intimate knowledge of such work will agree that there were many excellent shows.

THE North London Theatre Guild have adopted a good plan in presenting a special production, drawing upon the cream of acting ability in the 350 playing members of their affiliated societies, numbering over 20. The result will be seen in three performances on April 20th and 21st at Toynbee Hall of Bridie's *Tobias and the Angel*, under Gladys Burchell's direction. The Hon. Sec. of this North London Theatre Guild is Mr. Edgar L. Ring, 24, Abingdon Road, N.3, and no doubt he would welcome any applications from amateurs in North London seeking to become active members.

Among the new releases from Samuel French, Ltd., is *Claudia*, the comedy which ran for some time at St. Martin's Theatre. Its cast of three men and five women is in the right proportion for these times, and the one set is a farm interior. Many will remember its story, of a young newly married woman facing the loss of her mother simultaneously with the arrival of her first child. It is an American story, but charged with that basic emotion which is the essence of theatre.

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advance, that *On the Town* will be here, showing itself off, for many months. Metro will make it into a movie.

Ever since the arrival of *Bloomer Girl* last October, we have been waiting for the opportunity to splash superlatives over this lovely and enchanting production, which followed *Oklahoma!* right into the smash hit class and his been there ever since.

It is a delightful nostalgic period that *Bloomer Girl* dips into, pushing its way back to 1861 and Cicero Falls, a small Eastern town, where the Applegates preside and thrive on the profits blown from the manufacture of hoop skirts. Five of the Applegate girls are dutifully married to salesmen of their father's great line, but the remaining one, Evelina (Celeste Holm) is not such a pushover for a sales talk, and complicates things by falling for the more romantic Jeff (David Brooks), a goshdarn southerner. More conflict is stirred up with the barging in of Auntie Dolly Bloomer (Margaret Douglass); this Dolly Bloomer being that woman who started that free-thinking movement for women, about the same time as Lincoln was working to free the slaves. (Merely coincidental, I suppose.) Evelina is a cinch for Auntie Dolly's experiment, and you can imagine the fuss and fuming Pa Applegate works himself into when at the end of his elegant fashion parade of new season's hoop delights, Evelina appears in horrifying unabashed bloomers. This, sandwiched with other attacks of hitherto unheard of feminine uprisings, spells jail for Evelina and Miss Bloomer, but Auntie Dolly has an ace up her bloomers and pulls the strings to effect their release in time for the happy ending.

The book by Sig Herzig and Fred Saily is entertaining and elastic enough to allow Agnes de Mille to pep up the proceedings when necessary with a blaze of ballet, the most outstanding being the Civil War Ballet, which historical incident Miss de Mille disposes of with fifteen minutes of exciting effectiveness. There is also a tabloid presentation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

(Continued overleaf)



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ROBERTSON HARE, **ALFRED DRAYTON**

Directed by **Richard Bird**

which has the impish Joan McCracken as Topsy, tumbling across Eliza's ice. This young Miss McCracken is the "find" from *Oklahoma!* now in the guise of Daisy, the maid in the Applegate mansion. She pulls out all her plugs as a victim of sex suppression in her strip "hoop" tease "T'morra' T'morra'," a number that rips the roof. Celeste Holm's Evelina is also a performance of which to be proud. After making her mark in *Oklahoma!* she took some tests for the movies, but John C. Wilson and Nat Goldstone, envied producers of *Bloomer Girl*, rescued her from that horrible Hollywood fate and set her up on Broadway again to sing her share of the Harold Arlen music and E. Y. Harburg lyrics, which is one of the most satisfying scores in ages and includes: "Evelina," "Right as the Rain" and "When the Boys Come Home." The coloured Dooley Wilson and Richard Huey, as two fleeing slaves, strike back with "The Eagle and Me" and "I Got a Song," respectively. Lemuel Ayers' settings and Miles White's costumes get the audience gasping and leave you spell-struck. The prized effect being "Sunday in Cicero Falls" where, as the lyric goes, "even the rabbits inhibit their habits," "Sunday in Cicero Falls."

Those crazy zanies, Olsen and Johnson, who have knocked themselves into the millionaire class with *Hellzapoppin* and *Sons o' Fun* have just opened up another mad mint with *Laughing Room Only*, which they have again presented in association with the Shuberts. This follows the same grab bag formula of whacky surprises and everybody gets his whether on stage or in the audience. For three hours it is as though a whirlwind has taken over the Winter Garden Theatre. The aisles are jammed with stooges running up and down; chorus girls pick out men in the audience to dance with; the lights go out and the woman next to you screams; guns boom in the balcony; and service men compete in crazy competitions for dazzling prizes. Interspersed in all this bedlam are old vaudeville sketches, so-so songs and now and then to give the energetic participants a chance to catch a breath a ballet is tossed in. Yes, even Olsen and Johnson have been bitten by the ballet bug. On to all this, high class costumes have been hung and smart Stewart Chaney settings set-off the stage. There never has been anything quite like the hilarious horseplay of these madmen of mirth and they are again hitting the funnybone of America.

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